TALES FROM THE

DC DARK MULTIVERSE 1

BATMAN™ KNIGHTFALL

SNYDER • HIGGINS
FERNANDEZ • GUIMARÃES

ANDERSON

·ALL HAIL·
·SAINT·BATMAN!·

TALES FROM THE DARK MULTIVERSE

BATMAN KNIGHTFALL

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BATMAN CREATED BY **BOB KANE** WITH **BILL FINGER**

THE MULTIVERSE.

A COLLECTION OF POSSIBILITIES AND REALITIES.

A VAST LANDSCAPE OF WORLDS, HELD BACK FROM DARKNESS--

--BY THE THINNEST OF BARRIERS.

BUT WHAT IS THAT BARRIER?

A MOMENT.

AIIIEEE!

NO! BATMAN! PLEASE HELP--

JOKER!

A CHOICE.

STOP!

KRAK

$$$$$$

...STOP... STOP...

BETWEEN WHAT WE KNOW...

...AND WHAT SHOULD NEVER BE.

I HAVE TRIED TO KEEP MY GAZE ON THE MULTIVERSE.

I HAVE TRIED TO IGNORE THE WORLDS BEYOND THE BARRIER.

I NO LONGER CAN.

A CRISIS IS COMING...PERHAPS THE GREATEST YET. AND IF THE MULTIVERSE IS TO SURVIVE, IT MUST BE STRONGER.

MY NAME IS TEMPUS FUGINAUT, AND I AM ONE OF THE ONLY BEINGS WHO CAN MOVE FREELY BETWEEN THE MULTIVERSE'S TWO REALMS. IT IS MY POWER...AND MY CURSE.

TODAY I HAVE COME HERE, TO THAT VAST FORBIDDEN REALM CALLED...THE DARK MULTIVERSE.

EVERYTHING YOU FEAR, EVERY POSSIBILITY, LIVES HERE, AS ITS OWN WORLD. IN THE PAST, THESE WORLDS VANISHED WHEN THE FEAR WAS QUELLED, BUT LATELY, WITH THE SOURCE WALL BROKEN AND THE CRISIS COMING, THINGS HAVE CHANGED...BECOME UNSTABLE.

WORLDS DOWN HERE ARE MUTATING, TAKING ON LIVES OF THEIR OWN, LIVING BEYOND THE IMAGINATIONS OF THEIR CREATORS.

I AM HERE NOW TO SEE IF ANY OF THESE WORLDS MIGHT BE HELPFUL IN THE COMING FIGHT...

TODAY ONE FAMILIAR WORLD CALLS OUT.

"I AM *BANE*--AND I COULD *KILL* YOU...

"*INSTEAD*, I WILL SIMPLY..."

TO SEE IF NEW HEROES, FORGED IN THE FIRES OF OUR FEARS, MIGHT LIVE HERE IN THIS TERRIBLE PLACE.

IF NONE EXIST... I FEAR WE MAY ALL BE DAMNED TO DARKNESS.

...BREAK YOU!

A BROKEN WORLD.

LOST, LONG AGO.

TO THE WRONG SUCCESSOR--JEAN-PAUL VALLEY

HIS... COSTUME?

A PERVERSION OF THE MANTLE.

AHH!

EVENTUALLY, BRUCE WAYNE RETURNED, LOOKING TO FIX HIS MISTAKE--

--AND SAVE HIS CITY FROM THE USURPER.

IN ANOTHER WORLD...HE WAS SUCCESSFUL.

BUT NOT HERE.

I PROMISE YOU, BRUCE. YOU WERE RIGHT TO PICK ME.

I AM WHAT GOTHAM NEEDS.

AND I'LL *SHOW* YOU.

IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, GOTHAM CITY UNDERWENT WIDESPREAD CHANGE.

A PURGING FIRE.

AN EXTENSIVE REMAKING.

GOTHAM IS A CITY OF CODES...OF SEARING TENETS THAT PROTECT ITS PEOPLE, AND ITS RESOURCES, FROM THE WORLD.

BUT NOW, I CAST MY GAZE ON IT ONCE MORE.

ONCE MORE IT STANDS AT A PRECIPICE.

ONCE MORE...

THIRTY YEARS LATER.

...IT FACES A GREAT CHANGE.

"YOUR CITY IS *SECURE.*"

THE DUMAS HOME.
FORMERLY WAYNE MANOR.

HOWEVER, THERE IS A SITUATION THAT REQUIRES YOUR ATTENTION.

EARLIER TODAY, A MAN WAS APPREHENDED. INTENDING TO DO HARM.

WE KNOW -*WHEEZE*- HIS INTENTIONS?

HIS ASSORTMENT OF WEAPONS SPEAK TO HIS AMBITION, MY LOVE.

-*WHEEZE*- WHO IS HE?

AN OUTSIDER. ***LUIS RAMOS.*** OUR "FRIEND" ***MR. COBBLEPOT*** PROVIDED SAFE PASSAGE.

THE CARDINAL APPREHENDED RAMOS BEFORE HE COULD CARRY OUT HIS CAMPAIGN, WHATEVER THAT WAS TO BE. HE'S REMAINING TIGHT-LIPPED.

HOWEVER, NEWS OUTSIDE GOTHAM IS NOT GOOD. THE *WOODRUE PANDEMIC* IS SPREADING--PEOPLE ARE DUMPING UPWARDS OF TWO THOUSAND PETRIFIED BODIES A DAY INTO THE LAZARUS PITS. THE PITS' POWER IS DEPLETED, THOUGH, AND THE VICTIMS ARE COMING BACK ONLY HALF RESURRECTED.

AND AFTER THE *PARASITE CATACLYSM* IN METROPOLIS TWO YEARS AGO, THE PRESSURE IS MOUNTING FOR GOTHAM TO--

THE OUTSIDE WORLD DOES *NOT* CONCERN US. INSTRUCT *TORCHBEARER* TO GATHER COBBLEPOT, ALONGSIDE RAMOS.

BUT MY PRESENCE =*WHEEZE*= WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE. =*WHEEZE*= THERE ARE OTHER MATTERS I MUST ATTEND TO.

...OH. YES. THAT'S *TODAY*, ISN'T IT?

JEAN-PAUL, MY LOVE, IF I MAY...EACH YEAR, THIS EXCHANGE PLAYS OUT EXACTLY THE SAME.

MUST YOU REALLY PUT YOURSELF THROUGH IT ONCE MORE?

I MADE A PROMISE, *MADELINE*. AND WHAT *ARE* WE...

...WITHOUT THE STAPLES OF *TRADITION?*

-=WHEEZE=-

chk chkk

AHHHHHH...

THE CARDINAL AND THE TORCHBEARER HAVE MY PROXY. MAKE SURE THAT JUDGMENT IS SERVED.

...OF COURSE, MY LOVE. AS YOU WISH.

WAYNE TOWER.

THE END OF THE THIRD SUNDAY, DURING THE LAST SUMMER MONTH. A *CONSTANT* OF OUR TIME TOGETHER.

AND YET TODAY I WONDER. WILL *THIS* BE THE DAY THAT EVERYTHING CHANGES?

WILL *THIS* BE THE DAY YOU FINALLY ADMIT THE TRUTH...

...BRUCE?

A GATHERING OF FORCES IN GOTHAM CENTER. AN EXAMPLE TO BE SET?

AN OUTSIDER WITH ILL INTENTIONS. HE MUST BE DEALT WITH.

AND COBBLEPOT, TOO. I'M SURPRISED IT'S TAKEN YOU THIS LONG.

-WHEEZE- SO I HAVE YOUR APPROVAL.

YOU HAVE MY DISDAIN--

GHHHHHHN--

...HUFF... HUFF...

THE SEIZURES GROW WORSE, DON'T THEY? NOT ENOUGH TO KILL YOU, BUT ENOUGH TO KEEP YOU IN *AGONY.*

AS ALWAYS, I COME OFFERING PEACE. I ONLY REQUIRE THE SIMPLEST OF ACKNOWLEDGMENTS... AND ALL YOUR PAIN WILL *END.*

AND WHAT...ABOUT TIM...DICK... ALFRED, AND ALL THE OTHERS? ALL THE PAIN...YOU CAUSED *THEM?*

I DID WHAT NONE OF YOU COULD. AS THE WORLD TORE ITSELF APART...*I* KEPT GOTHAM STANDING.

YOU RULED BY PARTIAL CODES, HALF MEASURES.

I DIDN'T RULE AT ALL.

BECAUSE YOU WERE TOO *FRIGHTENED.* I AM A BELIEVER IN MY OWN METHODS, MY EXAMPLE, AND NOW WE ARE WHAT THE REST OF THE WORLD ONLY WISHES TO ASPIRE TO.

I WAS *ALWAYS* THE BATMAN THIS CITY NEEDED, BRUCE. YOU ONLY NEED SAY IT...

...AND PEACE WILL FIND *YOU.*

THE BATMAN... THIS CITY NEEDS... IS THE ONE STRONG ENOUGH TO SAVE IT IN A CRISIS.

YOU'RE WEAK, PARANOID, DOPED UP ON MORE AND MORE VENOM. YOUR GRASP IS *SLIPPING.*

WHEN THE NEXT CRISIS COMES-- AND I PROMISE YOU, IT *ALWAYS* COMES-- YOU WILL FALTER.

AND YOU WILL *FALL.*

UNTIL NEXT YEAR, BRUCE.

"A MISTAKE, DEAR BOY. A *GRAVE* MISTAKE--"

OSWALD COBBLEPOT, YOU HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH AIDING AND ABETTING--

I HAD *NOTHING* TO DO WITH THESE WEAPONS--I RUN AN *HONEST* IMPORT BUSINESS!

--AND FACILITATING ACCESS TO WEAPONS OF WAR.

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO THIS MAN *IS!*

YOU ARE HEREBY FOUND GUILTY. YOUR SENTENCE... *DEATH.* BY THE GLORIOUS, RIGHTEOUS FLAME.

GENTLEMEN. *PLEASE.* TAKE A MOMENT AND DISCUSS THIS WITH ME. OUR SAINT AND I HAVE HELD *A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL* RELATIONSHIP. LET ME SPEAK TO HIM. IF I *AM* IN THE WRONG, THEN I SHALL MAKE EVERYTHING RIGHT.

THIS HAS ALL JUST BEEN A *GRAVE MISUNDERSTANDING--*

FWWWT

LUIS RAMOS. YOU HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH UNLAWFUL ENTRY INTO GOTHAM CITY, POSSESSION OF--

DO WHAT YOU WILL. IT WON'T CHANGE WHAT'S COMING.

I'M JUST THE BEGINNING. AND THERE'S NOTHING YOU OR "SAINT BATMAN" CAN DO TO STOP *THE RECKONING--*

SCHWWT

FOR GOTHAM!

FOR GOTHAM!

FOR GOTHAM!

FOR GOTHAM!

FOR GOTHAM!

FOR GOTHAM!

FOR GOTHAM!

FOR GOTHAM!

FOR GOTHAM!

KOOM

KOOM

KA-KOOM

KOOOM

KRA-KOOOM

WHAT HAPPENED?

EXPLOSIONS, MY LOVE. *FIVE* OF THEM. SEVERAL ACOLYTE HALLS HAVE BEEN TARGETED. I...DON'T KNOW HOW MANY ARE **DEAD**...

SIR, PURGATORY HAS BEEN COMPROMISED. HERETICS FLOOD THE STREETS, AIDED AND ARMED BY A **SHADOW ARMY.**

THEY'RE RAIDING THE MAIN CATHEDRAL, ATTEMPTING TO WREST CONTROL.

SIR, IT'S A **COUP.**

THEN WE WILL *MEET* THEM HEAD-ON, TORCHBEARER.

SAINT TO SINNER.

THE ATTACKS ARE UNDERWAY.

OLD GOTHAM AND ROBBINSVILLE ARE IN CHAOS.

OUR FORCES ARE SEIZING THE MOMENT.

GPD

GPD

GPD

YEAH, YEAH. SO YOU KEEP SAYING. ARE YOU--?

ALMOST IN POSITION. STAY FOCUSED. I'LL SEE YOU IN THE TUNNELS.

I MADE IT ACROSS THE RIVER.

YOU'RE TWO MINUTES EARLY.

WHAT CAN I SAY? THE SWIM WAS *WAY* EASIER THAN WE TRAINED FOR.

I PROMISE, THE REST WON'T BE.

GOOD LUCK.

FWWT

GHNN!

?

KSSH

UHNN!

WAYNE TOWER

WAYNE... TOWER... *BACKUP...*

I HEARD WHAT THEY DID TO YOU...

...BUT SEEING IT IN PERSON... OOF.

WHO ARE YOU?

NAME'S *TOURNE.* I'M HERE TO SAVE YOU AND LIBERATE GOTHAM. BUT WE HAVE TO MOVE QUICK. I GIVE IT FIFTY-FIFTY ODDS OUR ARMY TAKES THE CATHEDRAL.

THEY WON'T.

WE'LL SEE.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

OLD ENOUGH TO BE HERE.

YOU THINK *YOU'RE* GOING TO SAVE GOTHAM? YOU'RE NOT EVEN THE FIRST ONE TO EXECUTE A FULL-SCALE ASSAULT ON THE CITY.

WHAT MAKES YOU *POSSIBLY* THINK YOU'RE UP TO THE TASK?

FREEZE! DON'T YOU MOVE!

HANDS UP! *NOW!*

DID I NOT MENTION WHO MY FATHER WAS?

HN--

--RR.

THAT'S BETTER.

BRAKAKAKA

BRAKAKAKA

GHNN!

AHH!

THUD

KRNCH

I'M SURE YOU'RE WONDERING WHERE THE TUBES ARE...

AMONG OTHER THINGS...

MY BODY PRODUCES VENOM *NATURALLY*. GUESS MY DAD TOOK SO MUCH, IT MESSED WITH HIS GENES.

HM.

THE *SON OF BANE* AND THE ONE, TRUE BATMAN, TEAMING UP TO SAVE GOTHAM. IT'S GOT A NICE RING TO IT, DOESN'T IT?

I'M BARELY A HEAD AND A TORSO. I'M NOT SAVING *ANYTHING*.

DON'T WORRY. WE'VE GOT A PLAN FOR THAT.

SNIK

THE CATHEDRAL.
FORMERLY CITY HALL.

CITIZENS OF GOTHAM!

TURN YOUR BACKS ON YOUR FALSE IDOL, "SAINT BATMAN"!

WE'RE HERE TO GIVE YOU YOUR *FREEDOM!*

AND YOU WILL PAY FOR IT WITH *YOURS.*

YOU FEEL IT, DON'T YOU, AZRAEL?

THE TACTICS. THE ASSAULT. DESIGNED TO *EXHAUST* YOU.

YOU ARE *LOSING* CONTROL.

SNAP

JUST AS *HE* DID BEFORE.

NO...NO... I WILL *NOT* FAIL--

GHHN!

!

I'M FINE... =WHEEZE= JUST... NEED TO CATCH MY BREATH...

WE HAVE A PROBLEM, MY LOVE.

ONE OF THE EXPLOSIONS TARGETED THE RETAINING WALL ON THE EASTERN COAST. A PORTION OF THE CITY IS STARTING TO *SINK* INTO THE OCEAN.

CARDINAL. =WHEEZE=

TAKE AND HOLD THE CATHEDRAL. =WHEEZE=

CHK CHKK

I MUST DELIVER GOTHAM FROM *RUIN.*

DID YOU EVER MEET HIM?

"SAINT BATMAN"?

NO. YOUR *FATHER.*

...SAINT BATMAN FOUND HIM. WHEN I WAS A KID.

AND YOUR MOTHER--?

GHNNNN--

WAYNE?

ARE YOU OKAY? WHAT CAN I--

NOTH... NOTHING... ALREADY PASSED...

DID HE *REALLY* AMPUTATE YOUR LIMBS, ONE EVERY YEAR?

SAINT BATMAN HAS *CONVICTION.*

BESIEGED BY *WEAKNESS.*

HELLO, BRUCE.

SHIVA...

A LIFETIME AGO, YOU SOUGHT MY HELP. TO ACQUIRE THE SKILLS NECESSARY TO RECLAIM YOUR MANTLE AND YOUR CITY.

I *RETURN* TO YOU NOW, TO FINISH WHAT WE STARTED.

WHY?

NOT EVERYONE SAW IT, BUT GOTHAM WAS ALWAYS A BEACON UNDER YOU, BRUCE. YOU BROUGHT OUT THE BEST IN ITS PEOPLE, REMINDED THEM THAT THEY WERE ARBITERS OF A SHARED FATE.

WHEN YOU FELL, WHEN GOTHAM FELL, SOMETHING *BROKE*.

PLUS, THE SMUG SON OF A BITCH WHO DID *THIS* TO YOU KILLED MY FATHER. I'VE BEEN PREPARING MY WHOLE LIFE TO TAKE HIM OUT.

THE LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS HAS BEEN PLANNING THIS ASSAULT FOR *YEARS*. MOVING AGENTS INTO PLACE. SMUGGLING WEAPONS AND EXPLOSIVES INTO THE CITY. SO WE CAN *FREE* THIS PLACE.

THEN YOU DON'T NEED ME.

MY FATHER, HE COULD HAVE BEEN A HERO, BUT HE WAS WARPED BY YEARS ALONE, SEPARATION, ISOLATION. THAT'S THE DEVIL IN THIS. I AM THE SON OF YOUR ENEMY.

AND IF GOTHAM OPENS ITS DOORS AND THE WORLD SEES YOU FIGHTING WITH US...WE CAN FIX THE SPINE, BRUCE. THE WORLD CAN STAND AGAIN.

NOW, I HAVE THE *MEANS* TO GIVE YOU YOUR BODY BACK. THE ONLY QUESTION IS...

...DO YOU STILL HAVE THE *WILL* TO BECOME THE BATMAN THIS CITY NEEDS?

THE EASTERN COAST.

GHHHHN!

THE ONCE-GREAT AZRAEL. REDUCED TO *THIS.*

TELL ME, JEAN-PAUL.

IS THIS TRULY THE WAY IT ENDS?

SAINT... DUMAS... WHY... ARE YOU *HERE?*

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HERE, JEAN-PAUL. IN YOUR MOMENTS OF ***GREAT WEAKNESS.*** TO WATCH YOU ***FAIL.***

NO...

BRUCE WAYNE WAS ***RIGHT.*** YOU ARE ***SLIPPING.*** YOU HAVE BEEN FOR YEARS. YOU ARE ***NOWHERE NEAR*** UP TO THE TASK--

I... I AM THE ONE, TRUE BATMAN...

EVEN YOUR TIME AS AZRAEL... YOU ***NEVER*** LIVED UP TO THE MANTLE.

YOU ARE A ***FAILURE.*** AN ***IMITATION.***

I -UHNN- HAVE STABILIZED THE WALL! YOU ARE ***WRONG,*** DUMAS! I HAVE ***SUCCEEDED!***

AND YET, YOU WILL DIE IN THE SAME WAY THAT YOU LIVED.

WEAK. UNFULFILLED.

ANOTHER MAN'S ***PLACEHOLDER.***

SIR? SIR? CAN YOU HEAR ME?!

GET HIS HELMET OFF!

HHRRRKK!

PRAISE DUMAS! HE'S *ALIVE!*

...THE... CATHEDRAL...?

OUR FORCES HAVE SECURED IT, BUT THE WAR STILL RAGES. THE HERETICS OVERRUN THE STREETS. IT WILL BE A *LONG FIGHT.* BUT...THAT'S FOR ANOTHER DAY. RIGHT NOW--

NO...->WHEEZE<- WE WILL *CONTINUE* THE FIGHT...WE *WILL NOT YIELD.* ALL I REQUIRE...

...IS A *BOOST.*

ARE YOU *CERTAIN* THIS IS THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION, SIR?

YOU HAVE PUSHED YOURSELF BEYOND THE BRINK--THERE IS *NO* SHAME IN TAKING A FEW DAYS TO RECOVER--

EVERY...HOUR THAT PASSES... OUR ENEMIES GAIN *CONFIDENCE.* THIS CITY... NEEDS ME. IT *NEEDS* ITS SAINT...

GET ME... =WHEEZE= TO THE CABINET...

MADELINE? ARE YOU HERE? OUR SAINT REQUIRES *AID!*

MADELINE? WHERE ARE YOU--

NO...

ALL MY VENOM... *GONE?!*

LOSE SOMETHING? IT'S OKAY...

...IT HAPPENS TO THE BEST OF US.

SHIVA... AND THE *SPAWN*. I...SHOULD HAVE KNOWN. HOW... =/WHEEZE/=

...DID WE GET *IN* HERE? OH, WE HAD SOME HELP.

HELLO, MY LOVE.

MADELINE...? BUT...*WHY?*

I HAVE STOOD BY YOUR SIDE FOR MANY YEARS. SADLY...I NO LONGER CAN.

YOUR RELIANCE ON THE VENOM. YOUR *FIXATION* ON BRUCE WAYNE'S APPROVAL. THEY HAVE CLOUDED YOUR MIND. AND DESPITE MY PLEAS...YOU DO NOT LISTEN.

I AM SORRY, MY LOVE. BUT I CAN NO LONGER AID THAT WHICH I DON'T BELIEVE IN.

...VERY WELL.

CARDINAL...?

SCHWUT

...

...YOU HAVE INVADED MY CITY. BROKEN INTO MY HOME. TURNED MY *WIFE*.

YOUR DEATH WILL *NOT* BE SWIFT.

I COULD DAMN NEAR SAY THE SAME THING.

A CHILD AND AN OLD WOMAN? AGAINST *US*? YOU ALL MUST BE *MAD*.

THEY'RE NOT ALONE.

THEY HAVE *ME.*

BRUCE...?

NO!

SLAUGHTER THEM ALL--

CLIC!

KRAK!

TONIGHT WAS DESIGNED TO PUSH YOU TO THE BRINK. AND IF YOU SURVIVED...THEN YOU WOULD FACE *ME.* SO CONGRATULATIONS.

HONESTLY, I'M *GLAD* YOU MADE IT THIS FAR...

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO KILLING YOU FOR *WAY* TOO LONG--

THEN...YOU'RE GOING TO BE SORELY...

SHRRRRRIEEK

...DISAPPOINTED.

AHHHHH!

VENOM. SONIC DISRUPTORS. *GIMMICKS.*

THEY WILL *NOT* SAVE YOU, JEAN-PAUL.

GHN!

COME NOW! OUR SAINT NEEDS US!

GET YOUR ASS UP AND GET IT TOGETHER--

GYAHH!

KOOM

KOOM

BOOM

AFTER THEM!

!

?

YOUR "SAINT" TOLD ME I NEEDED STRONGER CODES.

I SEE IT NOW, WHAT MUST BE DONE. AND TONIGHT...AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...I FINALLY HAVE THE PROPER TOOLS.

?

THESE NANO-BATS, THEY GIVE ME *FLIGHT.* AND REACH I NEVER HAD BEFORE.

THEY ABSORB THE GENETIC PROFILE OF EVERYONE THEY TOUCH.

!!!

SLIKT

SO IT'S NOT REALLY KILLING, IS IT, AS YOU CAN ALL LIVE ON...

!

...THROUGH ME.

YOU PRESENT YOURSELF AS VIRTUOUS. YOU TURNED THE CITY INTO A *PARAGON* OF "DISCIPLINE AND CONTROL." BUT YOU'RE *NOTHING* OF THE SORT.

YOU'RE AN *ADDICT.*

EVEN MY *LOVE* GAVE UP THE VENOM. IF HE HADN'T, THERE'S NO WAY YOU WOULD HAVE *EVER* BEEN STRONG ENOUGH TO *TAKE HIS LIFE--*

SPLAT

GHN!

WHACK

YOU'RE...=*WHEEZE*=... RIGHT...=*WHEEZE*=... I *HAVE* BECOME RELIANT. AND IN TIME...=*WHEEZE*= I WILL ABSTAIN. BUT FOR TONIGHT, WITH THE CRISIS AT HAND...

...I WILL JUST HAVE TO FIND A *NEW SOURCE.*

RIP!

KSSSHH

GHHN!

THLUP THLUP

MUCH BETTER...

WHERE WERE WE?!

KRAK

YOUR TIME IS OVER, JEAN-PAUL.

GAHH!

GUH... NNN...

THIS *WILL NOT* END THE WAY YOU *BELIEVE*.

ARHHHHH!

KSSHH

YOU HAVE NO IDEA *WHAT* I BELIEVE, BRUCE.

YOU *NEVER* DID.

ARRRHH!

ARRRH!

FZZZZT

I... AM THE BATMAN DRIVEN BY *FAITH.*

BUT YOU...THE *ONLY* THING THAT EVER MOTIVATED YOU--

--WAS *FEAR!*

GHHN!

BUT YOU WERE RIGHT TO BE AFRAID, BRUCE.

I AM TOO *STRONG* TO FAIL.

YOU WERE ALWAYS DESTINED TO LOSE. TO BREAK. TO FALL ASIDE, IN FAVOR OF THE ONE, *TRUE* BATM--

SLKT

KR-AK

UHHNNN...

IT'S... OVER. YOU'VE *LOST.*

WE...WE DID IT...WE *REALLY* DID IT...

YES, MY DEAR. WE CERTAINLY DID.

AND NOW...WE OPEN THIS PLACE BACK UP...WE RECONNECT GOTHAM...WE GIVE PEOPLE HOPE AGAIN. *TOGETHER.*

THE WORLD IS BROKEN.

THAT'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN SAYING. THAT'S THE POINT OF ALL THIS. IF WE RECONNECT GOTHAM, WE CAN HEAL--

IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, BRUCE?

YOU CAME HERE TONIGHT TO TRY TO "SAVE THE WORLD." TO RECONNECT GOTHAM AND USE HER AND HER PEOPLE, TO HEAL A WOUND.

BUT THE TRUTH IS...SOME WOUNDS DON'T HEAL. WHAT'S BROKEN CANNOT ALWAYS BE FIXED. SOMETIMES...IT MUST BE MADE *NEW.* AND IT MUST TAKE CARE OF ITSELF.

WHAT'S GOOD FOR THE WORLD... IS *NOT* WHAT'S GOOD FOR GOTHAM.

SLIKK

SLIKK

SLIKK

SLIKK

FOR THIRTY YEARS, YOU'VE FORCED ME TO *WATCH* AS YOU PERVERTED MY LIFE'S WORK. MY *NAME.*

BUT...YOU WEREN'T WRONG BEFORE, JEAN-PAUL. YOU *DID* KEEP THIS CITY STANDING. YOU STARTED HER DOWN HER NEW PATH.

AND THE TRUTH IS, MY BIGGEST MISTAKE WASN'T CHOOSING *YOU.* MY BIGGEST MISTAKE WAS THE SAME AS YOURS-- RELYING ON ANYONE BUT *MYSELF.*

AND NOW, THANKFULLY... I'LL NEVER HAVE TO *AGAIN.*

GOTHAM IS *MINE*...AND I AM *HERS.*

A CHOICE.

A MOMENT.

THE THINNEST OF BARRIERS BETWEEN WHAT WE KNOW...

...AND WHAT SHOULD NEVER BE.

IT TOOK AN UNIMAGINABLE AMOUNT OF PAIN AND DECADES OF SUFFERING FOR BRUCE WAYNE TO SUCCUMB TO DARKNESS.

TO FINALLY GIVE UP ON EVERYONE BUT HIMSELF.

TO FORGE A NEW LEGACY TO WHICH THERE CAN BE NO SUCCESSOR--

--BATMAN THE BROKEN.

WITH THE CRISIS LOOMING, I CAST MY GAZE TO THE DARK MULTIVERSE, IN SEARCH OF ANY NEW WORLDS THAT MIGHT BE OF AID.

BUT PERHAPS... I WAS NAIVE TO BELIEVE THERE WAS ANY HOPE FOR A BROKEN WORLD.

AT LEAST, AS I SEE NOW...

...THERE IS NO HOPE FOR THIS ONE.

NEXT: THE DEATH OF SUPERMAN

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MURDER IS HIS ART.
CATCHING KILLERS IS HERS.

JOKER/HARLEY:
criminal sanity

WRITTEN BY #1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR
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